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No. 129

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

PURGATORY CHASM STATE RESERVA- TION COMMISSION

FOR THE

YEAR ENDING NOVEMBER 30, 1920 — 1921

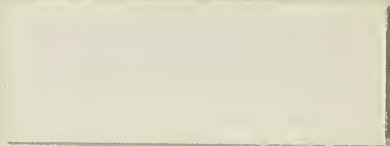


MAY 1, 1921

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BOSTON

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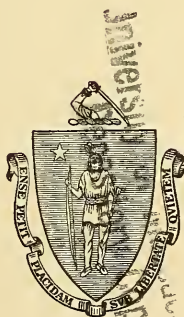
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PUBLICATION OF THIS DOCUMENT
APPROVED BY THE
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REPORT OF THE PURGATORY CHASM STATE RESERVATION COMMISSION.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

The Purgatory Chasm State Reservation Commission, which was appointed under chapter 327 of the Acts of 1919, organized in October of that year, with Josiah M. Lasell of Whitinsville as chairman, and Arthur E. Seagrave of Uxbridge as secretary, the third member of the Commission being Herbert L. Ray of Sutton.

Under an offer made prior to the passage of the statute above mentioned, the Whitin Machine Works of Whitinsville conveyed to the Commonwealth $59\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land, including Purgatory Chasm, for the value of the standing timber alone, which had been appraised by the State Forester at \$3,202.50. In addition, the Whitin Machine Works donated a tract of about 4 acres southwesterly of the larger parcel.

The Commission has contracted for an additional parcel of some 20 acres of sprout land, which is to be seeded with pines.

On the main tract much damage has been caused by chestnut blight. After consultation with forestry experts it has been deemed necessary to cut and remove all chestnut growth. This will necessitate an expense of about \$1,500 above the amount estimated for the removal of underbrush. If the cutting is done this winter there will be much salvage from chestnut ties and cordwood, which will otherwise be lost, and the Commission is of the opinion that if a sum equal to the money derived from the sale of ties and cordwood is made available for the use of the Commission, it will be able to complete the work imposed upon it by St. 1919, chapter 327, without any

further appropriation by the Commonwealth. It is possible that the Commission will be able to make a contract whereby this growth will be cut and removed under the supervision of the Forestry Department for the value of the wood.

If this is not done, however, it is recommended that a sum approximating the amount to be derived from the sale of ties and wood be inserted in the budget.

Purgatory Road, which leads to and through the reservation, is a Sutton town road. South of the reservation for nearly a mile it is impassable for vehicles of any kind. On the north-erly end it is still passable in dry weather, but dangerous.

It has been assumed that by co-operation of the Division of Highways and the Worcester county commissioners this road would be reconstructed this year, but as a State road is unnecessary, there seemed to be some doubt as to the authority to do the necessary work without the approval of the Legislature.

This highway is the only road leading to the reservation, and must be repaired before this property of the Commonwealth can be made readily accessible to visitors. The town of Sutton, with approximately 90 miles of road, ought not to be required to put this highway in condition for public use, as it is used almost solely by visitors.

The Commission, after consultation with State engineers, recommends that the Commonwealth and the county of Worcester reconstruct Purgatory Road as may be necessary for the accommodation and safety of the public. By the elimination of boulders, by widening and by proper grading, it is believed such a road can be constructed at a reasonable outlay, and a bill is presented herewith for that purpose.

The Commission has been studying methods of making the chasm itself reasonably safe for visitors, but without detracting from the natural features of the place. The chasm is nearly a quarter of a mile in length, lies between great ledges, and averages 40 feet in width and between 40 and 80 feet in depth.

By care in climbing, and with proper shoes to avoid slipping, persons can, without much difficulty, go through the chasm its entire length.

For those who are less venturesome, the path on the ledge to the east offers an opportunity to see much of the chasm except the caves and caverns at the bottom.


In midsummer the trees which grow in and about the chasm lend a picturesque charm to the place. Many trees cling to the ledges and boulders and overhang the chasm, and their roots grow upward until proper soil and nourishment are obtained.

This reservation, now preserved at a minimum cost, must be counted in the future as one of the real assets of the Commonwealth. Its accessibility to Boston and Springfield by automobile, with Worcester at its very door, assures its being a favorite recreation spot when the last obstacles to its approach are removed.

Respectfully submitted,

JOSIAH M. LASELL,
ARTHUR E. SEAGRAVE,
HERBERT L. RAY,

Purgatory Chasm State Reservation Commission.



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To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

This Commission has completed the work in acquiring the necessary land for the reservation, and has performed the other duties set forth in chapter 327 of the Acts of 1919. An agreement has been negotiated for the payment of one small tract of eight acres, which was a part of the original taking, and payment will soon be made.

Twenty acres of land in the reservation has been seeded with pines, and the chestnut trees which were afflicted with the blight have been removed.

The grove at the entrance to the chasm has been made more attractive, and after grading it is now suitable for parking automobiles.

The past summer the town of Sutton made temporary repairs to a part of Purgatory Road which is not in the reservation, and although it is very narrow and not safe for heavy automobile traffic, it has been made use of by thousands of automobiles this year.

The Commission most respectfully urges that the State and county be authorized to expend \$10,000 in making safe this road. The total expense to date has been less than \$5,000, which included the acquisition of this remarkable property. It is suggested that a committee of the Legislature make a visit to this place during the coming session in order to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the situation.

Arthur E. Seagrave, Esq., whose term of office expired this year, was obliged to decline a reappointment, and Dr. William L. Johnson of Uxbridge is his successor.

J. M. LASELL.
HERBERT L. RAY.
WM. L. JOHNSON.

